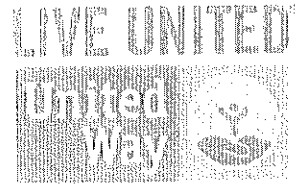


United Way of Greater New Haven

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February 20, 2013

Testimony to the Connecticut General Assembly Regarding Funding for STRIVE Employment Services

Please accept this testimony in support of continued funding for the STRIVE employment programs, operated statewide by Career Resources, Inc. of Bridgeport, CT.

I am writing to encourage Legislators to invest in STRIVE not just because it is a high-quality program delivering results, but because it is a service that allows the workforce system to achieve its potential.

Our communities share a great challenge to get people ready to work and to be successful in the workforce. The success of all of Connecticut pivots on having a workforce that supports a vibrant and diverse economy. This drives financially stable people and families, and builds prosperous communities.

We have identified that there are two major challenges to achieving this goal in New Haven, which is representative of Connecticut's urban centers: too many individuals of working age do not have the skills and readiness to be successful in obtaining and maintaining employment. Our state has significant systems of service providers and institutions of education working to tackle the hard skills challenges. STRIVE is unique in its success to tackle the employment readiness challenge. Without these skills, un- and under-employed individuals will not achieve financial stability, even when they have the technical skills, experience, and credentials in demand by employers.

At United Way of Greater New Haven, we are focused on creating economic opportunity for residents of the region by aligning resources and efforts in order to achieve large-scale community change. This often means focusing on leverage points where actions can yield large results. STRIVE is one of those leverage points – it creates people ready to prosper from the private and public opportunities available. United Way of Greater New Haven's investment in that promise has been significant committing more than \$150,000 over the last three fiscal years in support of STRIVE-New Haven's services.

And we have seen measureable results on those investments. STRIVE serves residents of our community that have multiple barriers to employment – people who are formerly incarcerated, without a high school diploma or GED, single parents receiving benefits, etc. – and helps them achieve economic opportunity. Committed to using Results Based Accountability (RBA), STRIVE can measure the impact of its work:

- STRIVE maintains over a 65% job placement rate
- STRIVE graduates have 72% two-year retention rate
- The average wage of STRIVE graduates' initial placements is above \$10 per hour

STRIVE has consistently provided leadership in innovation in Greater New Haven. STRIVE has been known for quality and effectiveness, and as a result of their consolidation with Career Resources, Inc., has expanded partnerships, reached new audiences, and introduced new products and services in order to achieve greater success for their clients. STRIVE has utilized its staff expertise and capacity to benefit a multitude of organizations as the agency refines its approach and expands its work to meet the changing needs of employees and employers in our region.

The Connecticut General Assembly has been a leader in making a commitment to understand and to invest in what works in a clear and measurable way. United Way of Greater New Haven shares those values. We will continue to invest in STRIVE as an effective and efficient strategy to achieve economic security for individuals and families in Greater New Haven, and encourage the Members of the General Assembly to continue your investment in the STRIVE system to achieve our shared goal of prosperity for our state.

-- Submitted by Amy Casavina Hall, Senior Director, Income and Health Initiatives